

# ARTslant Los Angeles

## *Ere Is My Head*

Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili

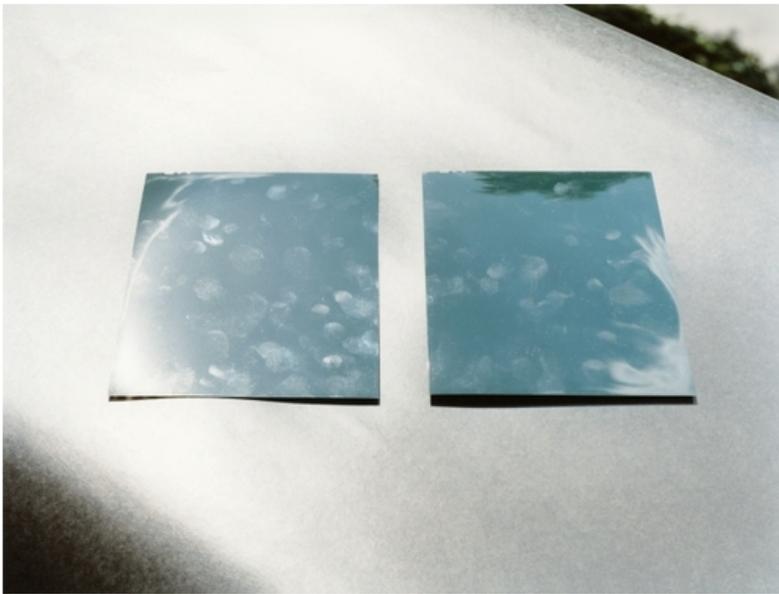
Eighth Veil

7174 Sunset Blvd. , Los Angeles, CA 90046

26 March 2010 - 31 May 2010

## Hand Cut: Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili

by Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer



*Ere Is My Head*, photographer Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili's first solo show of twenty photographs, is ostensibly about the medium's inherent morbidity, the past-ness of every image captured, the melancholic symbols of our mortality. The press release foregrounds Barthes' notion of the photograph as 'flat Death' in references to Camera Lucida that are both appealing and a turned off, as the crutch of intellectual name-dropping always makes me cringe a little. Alexi-Meskhishvili sets herself, then, a kind of difficult project in centering her

focus on the inherent philosophical nature of her medium if only because it is such a familiar fascination built into all photographs to one degree or another. Regardless of the show's Barthes-ian underpinnings, Alexi-Meskhishvili produces simple, pared-down photographs with hand-cut elegance and often-great emotive strength that quietly builds during viewing.

Committed to traditional darkroom techniques of color photography, her Flat Death series includes some straight photographs, some composite images of collaged negatives enlarged into chromogenic prints, and some more ethereal abstract explosions of chroma produced in darkroom processes. *Box*, 2008, is a head-on aerial shot of a wooden box casting a strong geometric shadow under full sun; a pale, faded vintage photo of a hippie chic in a field of flowers covers the lid and imbues the mundane set up with a second-hand sense of wistful remains. One of the best pieces is also one of the most banal: In flat *Death/Sheet Film (1)*, 2008, two identical rectangles of mirror-like sheet film are being exposed under full sun. It is nearly a throwaway shot. But, oily fingerprints and smudges soil the reflective surfaces. They mark manual handling and trace human flaws; accidental signs for human presence that is now absent.



This idea of spatial displacement and absence of the human subject is coded into the exhibition title's first word, *Ere*, a partial transcription that can be completed as here, there, or where. The title seems a play on that Pixies song, and so I was hearing it as I walked the space, finding an echo of rock defiance combined with self-reflection in the three images of hands flicking off the viewer with extended middle-fingers, two of which are cast in multicolored wax from the artist's hand and the third a flimsy lace glove. In fact, as much as the head is privileged by Alexi-Meskhishvili's title and the eponymous photograph of a vaguely head-shaped (but also fingerprint-shaped) hole cut out jaggedly from a black ground, hands, fingers, and fingerprints run through the show at least as much heads and claim some of the more affective works. Even indirectly, the manual lays its claim to *Weathering Heights*, 2008, a

photograph of a page (from a book? magazine?) taped to a city window in which central stacked-box shapes have been cut out, making it a very fragile and porous piece of hand-made, Duchamp-like ephemera. The photograph's title phrase—an orthographic perversion of the gothic romance—appears printed up top, injecting the novel's air of tragic love into these cut-up images of a time, a moment, a place that is no more. Many of the artist's subjects are weathered and weathering. Alexi-Meskhishvili's photographs work best when their collaged cuts and holes speak of the manual, the touch of the hand, the irregular snip of scissors in the lap—a gesture of intimacy and vulnerability, of idiosyncrasy and expiring warmth.

- Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer

All images courtesy Eighth Veil and the artist.

Posted by [Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer](#) on 26.04.10